




**CITY OF SAN DIEGO  
COUNCILMEMBER SHERRI S. LIGHTNER  
DISTRICT ONE**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

DATE: September 21, 2009  
TO: Jay M. Goldstone, Chief Operating Officer  
FROM: Councilmember Sherri S. Lightner   
SUBJECT: Citywide Emergency Winter Shelter Location

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I appreciate the difficult situation that resulted in the last minute request for each Councilmember to recommend a "winter shelter site in your district by 5:00pm on September 21, 2009," is another example of our City's failure to plan for the needs of its residents. It is almost as improvident and as ineffective as the business as usual process used to docket this matter at Council – wait until the last minute (we need a decision today or the shelter will not be open on time), provide no substantive evaluation of the various sites (in fact present the rejected sites from prior years), provide only two sites that can possibly be used (actually only one, because dedicated park land cannot be used), and leave staff holding the bag to explain why there was no public process or thoughtful consideration of other areas.

As a new councilmember, this is the first year that I am part of this effort to address homelessness as an elected official. The effort over the last ten years has been unsatisfactory. It is time that we really worked on this issue – not just where the winter shelter is to go, but what are we going to do as a region about homelessness. We must develop a true regional approach where each district shares in a well planned delivery of services rather than providing a temporary shelter in a location which changes yearly. I understand that we invested a substantial amount of money (\$140,000) in the preparation of a site last year that is "unavailable" this year. It was not a City site, it was privately owned and possible future use of the site was at the whim of the owner. How did that ever make sense and does it make sense to do the same sort of thing again this winter? Couldn't we care for more homeless, if we were able to use last year's site and did not have to pay to prepare another site?

As we move forward, we must achieve the following:

- A policy to deal with this issue in a realistic, regional manner, **not just for each winter.**
- Community participation and responsibility
- Responsible use of city funds
- Humane and effective policies
- Pro-active, long-term planned solutions – maximize the benefit by planning
- Participation from the county, state and federal government
- Partner with nonprofits, private entities and the public
- Partner with experts to develop effective programs

There are homeless throughout the San Diego region, not just downtown. This means that the solution must be regional and requires support from all communities. Certainly many locations to help with this issue will be more successful than one location, because it allows more of the broader community to assist from the private sector. There are numerous issues to be addressed and things which may have been considered in the past that may be relevant now. It is time to dialogue with the neighborhoods, the various service providers, the nonprofits, churches and institutions that are already working on this issue. Through coordination and sharing of ideas we can find a way to maximize our successes and minimize our costs. We can benefit from existing successes, studies and experiences of other jurisdictions. We need to evaluate all of the ideas and work on a solution now – not “in the future.”

To address the immediate issue that of where to place the emergency winter shelter, I recommend the following:

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** We make the best of another year of poor planning and adopt Councilmember Todd Gloria’s or Councilmember Carl DeMaio’s suggested sites for this winter.

***Rationale:*** There is a clear homeless population in downtown San Diego. Funds have been invested, the sites are close to ready and there has been community involvement. To date, other communities have not been involved in the process and other sites have not been evaluated either by the staff or the communities.

In addition to the immediate issue, we as a City – the Mayor, the City Council and the communities – need to own this issue and plan and implement a year-round solution. We need to humanely and effectively care for the homeless in our City and County. I recommend as a minimum the following:

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Begin work on a new process to involve all communities in establishing an integrated and coordinated regional system. There must be a mayoral team or task force to work on a regional solution.

***Rationale:*** We must provide for the homeless in a way that makes sense for homeless in each community and has the greatest probability of success. There is a current plan to end chronic homelessness and we need to implement it. Until there is a regional solution, the winter shelter will continue to be a divisive issue. This solution must address the whole homeless population, not just a portion of it.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** The City and each councilmember provide some support for the District 2 community this winter including 1) raising private funds for increased security; 2) providing meals transportation to offsite locations including those outside District 2; and 3) providing vouchers for hotels in each council district.

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** I believe if this is shown to be efficient, that the homeless in each our districts should be assisted by the City in our districts rather than centralizing the services, as is the current City model. In addition, these services should be year-round, not just during the winter.

***Rationale:*** There are homeless in each district. In most areas there are already private entities attempting to address some of the needs, because there is no help from the City. In particular, the Interfaith Shelter and CCSA have active outreach. How is the City partnering with these organizations and others?

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** The City should consider filing a lawsuit against San Diego County.

***Rationale:*** The City is already under court order. The City needs to start holding the county and other branches of government accountable for their responsibilities.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** Adopt the suggestion by Councilmember Marti Emerald to develop a Joint Powers Authority and develop a regional solution to the issues of homelessness.

As far as the original request to identify a site in District 1, I will work with the communities of District 1 and City staff to be part of an integrated and efficient regional solution. I would like to begin by requesting answers to these initial questions:

- What are the locations of all City-owned sites, along with the existing zoning and parcel sizes?
- What are the criteria for determining the parcel size outside of downtown?
- How much would it cost the City to relocate the services needed for the homeless population if it's moved from downtown?
- If the temporary shelter is moved to a neighborhood in North San Diego City, what is the fiscal impact to taxpayers and what is the strategy to move the homeless to this new shelter and ensure they receive the necessary services?

- Has there been a fiscal analysis on the impact of moving the temporary shelter anywhere outside of the downtown area?
- What is the impact to the East Village and downtown community if the temporary homeless shelter is moved out of downtown?
- What happens to the downtown community with no services for the homeless?
- Will the number of beds required be independent of the district in which the winter shelter is located?

SL:jr

cc: Honorable Mayor Jerry Sanders  
Honorable City Councilmembers  
Amy Benjamin, Program Manager